

## The New Reformation: Its Spirit and Structure (Part 2)

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<https://lifemessenger.org/new-reformation-spirit-structure-part-2/>

... until a time of reformation

Hebrews 9:10

Having established the deeply personal heart-foundation of reformation let us move from the individual to the corporate—from the new wine of the processed heart to the wineskin of corporate life.

Like the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation, the new reformation will be triggered through the unveiling of a truth.

However, the unfolding of truth in its restoration is progressive: "*The path of the just is as a shining light shining more and more to the perfect day*" (Prov 4:18). Jesus explained that "Man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that *is proceeding* from the mouth of God" (Mtt 4:4). The verb "proceeding" is in the present continuous tense. There is a 'present and proceeding' word for each generation. Martin Luther received it concerning 'justification by faith', John Wesley 'holiness', and the Pentecostals the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'. But what is the word for this generation? God give us an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church today!

### Priest, Prophet, & King

As the consummate and final word of God, Jesus is revealed in three dimensions: as Priest, Prophet, and King.

He showed himself in the historic Reformation as our *Great High Priest*, resulting in the recovery of 'justification by faith', the 'priesthood of the believer', 'water baptism'; and two centuries later through Wesley, 'sanctification'. The ascension-gift ministries restored in this time were that of the teacher, pastor, and evangelist (Eph 4:11).

In the revivals of the 20th Century, particularly mid-century, Christ was revealed as 'Prophet', resulting in the recovery of 'the laying on of hands and prophecy' (Heb 6:1; 1 Tim 4:14) and the ascension-gift ministry of the prophet (Eph 4:11).

And now, in the coming outpouring Christ will be revealed as *King*. Through this last great outpouring of the Spirit the ascension-gift ministry of the apostle will be restored hand-in-glove with 'resurrection life and eternal judgement'. The body of Christ will finally come to maturity—to the "full measure of the stature of Christ" (see Eph 4:11-13 & Heb 6:1-3).

Parenthetically, I might add that the restoration of the ascension-gift ministries has only been in measure. We view them very much through 1,800 years of tradition and Greek worldview. Their fullness awaits that time when Christ, who is the *Apostle and High Priest of our calling* (Heb 3:1), reveals himself in full measure to the church. At that time he will release mature apostleship as pivotal to the full emergence of the other ascension-gift ministries, all toward the final ingathering of the nations.

### The *crux* of the current reformation

The unveiling of Christ as *Priest* through the historic Reformation triggered revolutionary structural change; likewise, so will the revelation of Christ as *King*. Christ revealed as *Priest* cut off the human *priesthood* at the knees; and so, the revelation of Christ as *King* will cut off the human *kingship* at the neck.

This is the *crux* of the current reformation.

Through the prophet God protests, "*They set up kings without my consent; they choose princes without my approval...*" (Hos 8:4). This is alluding to Israel's rejection of Samuel for a king. They had relinquished the *Priesthood* to Aaron but now they went the next step, tragically relinquishing the *Kingship* to Saul. The old covenant church (ancient Israel) had been called out from the nations to be corporately a *kingdom of priests* (Ex 19:5-6)—to be God's vice-regents, spreading the knowledge of the glory of the Lord throughout the earth by a personal knowledge of one the true God. But now through her rebellion and

rejection of this knowledge of God she sold her calling, losing it to a separate caste of kings and priests.

As a type this foreshadowed the greatest misdevelopment in the entire new covenant church's history—her relinquishing of the *royal priesthood* (1 Cor 10:6, 11; 1 Pet 2:9) to a separate caste of kings and priests – the clergy – and therefore, to human control. The second and third centuries saw the rise of the monarchical bishop. As did ancient Israel, the church effectively declared, "*Give us a king like all the other nations*" (1 Sam 8:5). Rejecting the Samuels – the men of the Spirit (apostles and prophets) – they were replaced with a human office—the monarchical bishop, the direct equivalent of *senior minister* (pastor) in today's church. Authority gradually shifted from a relational and spiritual base to a hierarchical and organisational one, plunging the church into progressive idolatry and spiritual decline.

#### **Confusion between secular & spiritual authority**

This was accelerated by state patronage of the church under Constantine and subsequent emperors. The pagan role of the Emperor as high priest, Pontifex Maximus, was used to legitimise his interference in the church. The lines between secular and spiritual authority became completely blurred as the Emperor presided over church affairs and bishops acquired civil jurisdiction; *spiritual* authority was effectively replaced by *positional* authority.

The teaching of Jesus on this issue was ignored resulting in confusion between *secular* and *spiritual* authority; they are two completely different kinds of authority relating to two separate spheres.

Jesus taught this when He said:

25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

Matthew 20:25–26 ESV

One is *secular* relating to the civil/business sphere – “the Gentiles” – and the other is *spiritual* relating to the house of God—“among you”. The former is organisational and hierarchical – “lord it over you” – the latter is relational and spiritual — “the greatest shall be your servant”.

The former is upheld by the *sword of the civil magistrate*: legal, organisational, and ultimately coercive means (e.g. the rule of law through police, courts, laws, rules, constitutions etc); and the latter, by the *sword of truth*: the word of God and conscience. The former is seen, for example, in the employer/employee relationship requiring obedience to a position of authority. It is important to note that their position does not imply that they are a bad employer; the same applies to positions of traditional church authority. There are many fine men and women of God who occupy traditional positions of authority, whether they are called pastor, apostle, bishop, superintendent etc. The descriptor of the position is not so much the issue, although it is when it becomes a title—a proper-noun rather than an adjective (i.e. ‘Apostle Bill’ instead of ‘Bill the apostle’, or ‘Bill is apostolic’; or ‘Father Ted’). The issue, however, is that we unconsciously view the ministry described as an organisational position rather than a charismatic function; and once we do this it is accompanied with an official authority and title. This is despite Jesus' clear teaching that we were not to carry honorific titles:

But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

Matthew 23:8-10 NASB

The contemporary *apostolic movement* is falling foul of Jesus' teaching at this point. Its fondness for titles (e.g. ‘Apostle Bill’,

or 'Pastor Jack') is only symptomatic of a deeper Constantinian and non-relational view of authority. Without distinguishing between *spiritual* and *secular* authority it will only replicate history—more control, abuse and spiritual confusion.

The root problem was not fully addressed by the Reformation. Despite the recovery at an individual level of the *priesthood of the believer*, at a corporate level *priests* were merely replaced by *pastors*. We just switched titles. A *protestant priesthood* with official powers was the inevitable result of the Reformer's refusal to distinguish between *spiritual* and *secular* authority. The confusion between the two legitimised the Inquisition prior to the Reformation, and the drowning of Anabaptists during it. In both cases the church – whether Protestant or Catholic – self-consciously used the secular-civil arm. Because of the Constantinian confusion of authorities great abuse was perpetrated on the people of God.

To transfer the same concept of authority from *pastors* to *apostles*, often under the term *spiritual covering*, is to miss the heart of the reformation. It only serves to perpetuate the historic problem of a human intermediary between Christ and his congregation; and as such it can only be described as *anti-Christ*, which by definition means 'to be in the place of Christ'. As the great English poet, John Milton, aptly observed in his day, "The new *presbyter* [elder] is but the old *priest* writ large"; sometimes not a lot changes in times of reformation apart from vocabulary and title. This is a serious indictment on the current *apostolic movement* and more broadly on both traditional and contemporary church structures. To take the place of Christ over God's inheritance is to invite the displeasure of God. This is not to deny the restoration of true apostles to the church, but it is to declare that if this is to occur there must be a discerning between *secular* and *spiritual* authority. This discernment will then demand the exorcism of the former from the house of God.

In the light of the above miss-development, the revelation of the 'priesthood of the believer' and new covenant freedom, it demands repentance and rectification. The fear of the Lord is about to fall on the church. Many leaders will see the error of their ways and turn to the Lord in this regard.

#### **The two streams**

After all is said and done, there are only two streams in the current reformation. One flows on the surface and the other in the depths.

The former, flowing on the surface is visible, but prone to contamination. It pursues a profile and is accommodating to man's ways and methods, usually appealing to the cognitive and the pragmatic. It is identifiable with particular men or movements.

The latter is hidden, flowing underground and is free from contamination. It is "deep calling to deep". It pursues a deep spirituality and doesn't seek a public profile or recognition—it does not yield to man's ways or measures of success. It pursues the ways of the Spirit and is often difficult to identify with any particular man or movement, although it is certainly not without leaders.

The surface stream was seen in the mainstream Reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. They were given great profile, which allowed the Reformation to survive and indeed spread in the face of intense opposition. However, this profile led Luther to trade his earlier call to freedom for the patronage and protection of the German princes. The stream was contaminated, leading to the confusion of civil and spiritual authority, retarding the spiritual development of the Reformation. Even to this day the Lutheran church of Germany remains the state church. Nevertheless, this is not to deny the providence of God in the princes' patronage of the Reformation, and thus, its survival—even if it was somewhat diluted.

However, the underground stream refused to compromise on this very point. What has been commonly recognised as the 'medieval underground', a broad-based faceless movement of dissent and spiritual renewal dating back 1,000 years, surfaced almost contemporaneously with Luther. This more radical stream of the Reformation became known as the Anabaptists. So named for their commitment to rebaptism coming out of the revelation that the church (*ecclesia*) are the 'called out ones'—a 'gathered believing community' as distinct from the secular community and its civil jurisdiction.

This was in stark contrast to Christendom—a prevailing monolithic system consisting of an unholy alliance between secular and spiritual authorities. Entry to this system was through natural birth and infant baptism. One was simply born into Christendom. To be rebaptised, as a believing adult, was therefore viewed as a declaration of war on the old system and was deeply subversive—both socially and politically. From Constantine onwards Christianity, as the state religion, had served as social cement.

This prophetic posture of the underground church in rebaptism, separating secular and spiritual spheres, paved the way for the separation of church and state and the religious freedom now enjoyed in the USA and other Western nations. Nevertheless, it must be stated, that the separation of church and state was not conceived so as to separate Christianity from the state and the public square; rather, it was conceived so as not to favour one denomination of the faith over others through a state sanctioned church.

### *The ultimatum*

In view of this, an ultimatum must be declared: if the underground stream does not take the reformation to the next level by redefining the nature and function of authority within the church even the religious freedoms that have already been won will be lost. In fact, the state will either revert to Christendom where Christianity, as the defacto state religion, is used again as social cement; or more likely in the short term, the prevailing post-Christian culture will revert to occult paganism, as the state religion, for the same reason.

We have the separation of church and state. But it is now time for the separation of secular and spiritual styles of leadership within the church—for the exorcism of hierarchical and ‘Gentilic’ authority from the house of God.

Pastors and leaders, now is the time to humble ourselves and seek the Lord. He will not share his glory with another.

It is time to relinquish what belongs only to him.

[The New Reformation: Its Spirit and Structure \(Part 1\)](#)

Print-friendly pdf: [The New Reformation – Its Spirit and Structure](#) (includes part 1 & 2)

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